

3 March 1986

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

FROM:

SUBJECT: PBC Comments on Secretarial Pay Sked

The following are the comments of the PBC Task Force on the Secretarial Pay Schedule proposal:

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My first reaction is the extreme length of the time-in-grade requirements. All of our "Senior Secretaries" will be "old" by the time that reach the upper levels. It appears that too much emphasis has been placed on length of service and not enough on performance.

The question of status rears its ugly head again in this attempt at attracting and keeping secretaries. Unless some powerful marketing is done, the stereotype attitude that "A secretary is just a secretary is just a secretary" will continue to be prevalent. Secretaries must become part of the management team and be placed "where the action is". They have to be given status that is their own and not dependent upon their "bosses" grade or status.

I don't have the answer to this one. It will take a lot more study and discussion before a suitable answer is developed.

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This is a well thought out and well defined study, and its implementation should assist in the Agency effort to attract and retain high caliber secretaries. However, the program will not entirely solve the Agency problem of high attrition among the secretarial ranks. Based upon conversations with Agency

secretaries, it appears that the desire for more money and more interesting and challenging duties are often not the dominant motivating factors in seeking a position outside of the secretarial occupation. A frequently cited motive is to gain status, i.e. they feel that as "mere secretaries" they are treated as "second class citizens." Along with the education process for the implementation of the Experimental Pay and Job Evaluation Program, managers must be made to understand secretaries' need for status and appreciation. Managers must make an effort to seek out opportunities to enhance the status of the secretary. This can be achieved through including them in staff meetings, soliciting their ideas, ensuring that they receive travel and training benefits when appropriate, and treating them as valued team players of the organization.

In line with the status issue, an argument could be made for changing the name of the Level III Senior Secretary to another title (e.g. Administrative Assistant).

The study discusses the conversion of secretaries to the experimental program, but does not address personnel in other job positions who are currently performing responsibilities which will be incorporated into Level III and Level IV Secretarial positions. Examples of such employees are Administrative Assistants and Intelligence Assistants (IA). Based upon position descriptions in the study it seems that Level III and IV Secretaries will be relieving these types of employees from responsibilities, rather than relieving "Officers" as the study indicates. The study does not indicate whether these personnel will be incorporated into the Secretarial Program, although the cover memorandum alludes to the possibility. With the enriched responsibilities of the Level III and Level IV Secretaries there would be little need for the support personnel currently performing those functions.

One disadvantage of the conversion of support personnel (IAs, administrative assistants, etc.) to the Secretarial program is a potential morale problem to some who feel they would be taking a step down in terms of status.

If the Program on Creative Management which is recommended as a Level IV training requirement is the quota course currently sponsored by OT&E, it is not appropriate for the Level IV secretary. The course is targeted for the GS 13-15 manager, and since attendance is limited, it should not be a required course for the Secretary.

1. The proposed Experimental Pay and Job Evaluation Program for Secretaries is certainly a step in the right direction. I have the following observations and suggestions:

Promotion criteria:

- Time-in-grade is emphasized as promotion criteria. Recommend using other criteria; i.e., relevant experience, minimum overall rating requirements on current PAR, etc. If time-in-grade remains as promotion criteria suggest lowering number of years.

- Required training includes OTE quota courses which may be oversubscribed. Employees should not be penalized if the classes are not available.

Pay Schedule: The highest attrition rates, based on historical data, occur at Levels III and IV. The proposed pay schedule does not entice secretaries to remain in the occupation. Level IV caps at \$33,128 which is less than GS-11 step 10. Suggest increasing Level IV step 1 to \$24,073 (each increment to equal \$634) with step 20 to cap at \$36,119. This is more in line with the salary differences between the other levels.

2. Here's a "gotcha": Attachment A, page 2, delete "red lines".

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The document is well written and the overall "Banding" system is certainly a leap in the right direction. It should both boost morale and help to give employees in the secretarial career path the recognition and status that they deserve. The two major complaints from secretaries and computer assistants that I hear again and again is the feeling of "hitting the ceiling" after one or two promotions and the lack of respect, consideration, and status felt by secretaries due to actions by co-workers and managers. Managers and other agency employees should be discouraged from treating these vital people as "second rate" since a good secretary in many work situations will make or break a manager and an office component.

As far as the body of the proposal is concerned, I feel that the following issues should be addressed, or addressed in more detail.

1. Time in grade restraints...is this an absolute? Is this a guideline or a rule?
2. Training....Could training in organizational skills be added? ie: keeping a calendar; VM/Aim file handling; also training in script and syspub document generators;

Again, on the whole, the document is thorough and addresses the two primary concerns that I hear from secretaries and computer assistants: pay-cap within their slot and lack of status. It gives the employee a well defined career path and the incentive of recognition for good job performance. This should accomplish the objective of reducing turnover while increasing secretary morale

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if it is combined with a change of attitude by the minority of managers and employees who hold the distinction of "professional" vs "secretarial".

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Experimental Pay for Secretaries paper appears to address the needs for keeping good secretaries. The major complaints heard were "topping out" without shorthand skills and lack of recognition, travel/training, etc. I did not see the paper address the issue of part timers and how they do or do not fit into the program.

Also feel that VM should be required training in Level I along with word processing.

I feel time in grade requirements are lengthy and constraining. There should be something else to suffice for time in grade.

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